
INTERPOL

Extending Law Enforcement's Reach Around the World

By JOHN J. IMHOFF, M.A., CPA, and STEPHEN P. CUTLER, M.A.

A police chief in a small midwestern town receives an anonymous note that an immigrant, a recent arrival to the community, allegedly has a long history of involvement in illegal drug abuse and is wanted in his native country for drug offenses. The chief wants to deal firmly with potential drug dealers but finds himself stymied in his ability to contact authorities overseas to research the allegations due to language barriers and time zone differences.

In another city, officers find a sizeable hoard of cash in a suspect's possession during the execution of a search warrant. The officers strongly suspect that the money constitutes proceeds from illegal drug transactions. The suspect, however, claims he legitimately earned the money during his rock band's tour of Europe. The courts initially seem sympathetic to the suspect's arguments, and the seizing officers become frustrated in their ability to disprove the suspect's story.

Parents from a European nation send their daughter to a school in the United States for advanced studies in the English language. She is hired by an unscrupulous employer who makes her work in a kitchen under dangerous conditions



and do other undocumented menial field labor for extremely low wages.

How can the officers in these situations verify their suspicions? How do they determine the appropriate foreign agency or person to contact for information and then

communicate their request to that person in the appropriate language? How can police officers accomplish routine humanitarian tasks when confronted by international borders?

The officers in each of these cases could take advantage of the

International Criminal Police Organization, more commonly known as INTERPOL. Created nearly a century ago, INTERPOL enables law enforcement information to flow easily from officer to officer across borders, language barriers, time zones, and terrains in the basic service of justice.

INTERPOL's Mission

INTERPOL originated in 1914, when police professionals from 14 European countries gathered in Monte Carlo, Monaco, to discuss currency counterfeiting and other matters of mutual interest. Then, as now, criminal activity flowed easily across national borders while police officers found themselves limited by sovereignty, laws, absence of treaty relations, nationalistic pride, and a general lack of cooperation.

Founded on the recognition of, and respect for, national sovereignty, INTERPOL is not an international police force, has no police powers of its own, and does not have its own independent agents or officers. The organization facilitates the interaction and cooperation of police agencies in nations around the globe. Those agencies operate within their own national boundaries and remain bound by their own national laws and regulations. INTERPOL does not conduct investigations on its own authority or without a request for assistance from a recognized law enforcement authority of a member nation.

Now headquartered in Lyon, France, INTERPOL helps local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies coordinate their investigations with the world, rapidly obtain

information, and seek the return of fugitives or stolen property. INTERPOL conducts these tasks within the framework of treaties and international laws but effectively accomplishes them in most cases because the member nations have agreed to the methodology established by INTERPOL.

The Communication System

INTERPOL connects its worldwide offices through a secure communication network that enables confidential and instantaneous handling of messages and leads for international criminal investigations. This network links the central office, known as the National Central Bureau (NCB) in each of the 177 INTERPOL member nations with each other as well as INTERPOL headquarters. This secure communication system carries text messages, as well as high-resolution images, such as counterfeit notes, photographs, or fingerprints.

NCB offices around the globe handle requests for assistance from police departments or judicial authorities daily. Departments frequently request assistance in locating a fugitive or obtaining information about a criminal. In those cases, INTERPOL headquarters may issue an international circulation of information known as a diffusion—an electronic dissemination of wanted person information to agencies in a particular country or area who then immediately broadcast the wanted person information to their officers. The diffusion acts in the same manner as an “all points bulletin” or “APB,” and precedes the official wanted person flier or red notice.

INTERPOL also may issue a notice, similar to a diffusion, and transmit it simultaneously to all 176 member countries and the NCB in the United States (USNCB). INTERPOL color-codes these notices into 10 categories and uses



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them to communicate various types of information. Because of the color code, officers receiving the notice immediately know the nature of the alert. For example, INTERPOL issues a red notice alerting officers at any location, especially border and immigration checkpoints, that their subject has outstanding arrest warrants. The red notice functions as an international wanted poster, and a number of countries recognize it as a legitimate arrest warrant.

INTERPOL uses a blue notice when authorities gather information about a suspected criminal or want to trace and locate a subject. In this way, blue notices help law enforcement officials find material witnesses or develop new leads and information on subjects.

For a proactive action, INTERPOL may issue a green notice to alert authorities of career criminals who have committed, or are likely to commit, offenses in several countries. These habitual offenders typically are convicted child molesters or child pornographers who move freely worldwide in search of new victims.

Purple notices detail unusual criminal methods of operating or new methods of contraband concealment, and gray notices circulate information about various organized crime groups and activities. On occasion, INTERPOL disseminates information concerning international criminal activity that does not involve a specific group but remains important. Orange notices alert agencies to this activity. Information detailing and describing different types of stolen or seized cultural objects is circulated via a

white notice, and the FOPAC bulletin provides money laundering information.

INTERPOL uses the notice program to give wide publicity to other areas, as well. Yellow notices feature missing persons, including missing or abducted children. Information requests related to unidentified dead bodies whose true identities have been masked by apparent false documents may be circulated through black notices.

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In order to issue a notice from the United States, the USNCB must receive a written request. For a red notice, or wanted person notice, the USNCB must have a confirmation of both a felony warrant and entry into the National Crime Information Center computer. Additionally, prosecuting attorneys must certify that they will cooperate with the U.S. Department of Justice in extraditing the fugitive back to the United States, including the covering costs of transportation and other related matters.

The free flow of information between law enforcement officers only can exist if confidentiality and

reliability are ensured. To protect against disruption or interception, INTERPOL encrypts all of its communications.

In addition to providing secure communication facilities, INTERPOL has taken important steps to ensure that its archived or filed information remains safe. A supervisory board governs policy for the records held by INTERPOL and sets out rules and regulations for the organization to follow. The board conducts checks and audits to guarantee the implementation of proper procedures.

INTERPOL conducts all business in four of the most commonly spoken languages: Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. Thus, communications remain standardized without the need to translate hundreds of languages. INTERPOL communications travel around the world with little difficulty because of this uniformity of languages.

Information Resources

INTERPOL headquarters also operates the Automated Search Facility, or ASF system. This system allows NCBs to search for international records on people, using such criteria as family name, including phonetic spellings, given names, dates of birth, and nationalities. Through ASF and other INTERPOL databases, police officers gain access to criminal information, such as arrest warrants, from around the globe.

In addition to providing the ability to communicate rapidly, a variety of state-of-the-art computer systems allow member countries to carry out the mission of combating

Types of INTERPOL Notices

Red	Seeks arrest of subjects for whom arrest warrants have been issued and where extradition will be requested (e.g., fugitives).
Blue	Seeks information (e.g., identity, criminal records) for subjects who have committed criminal offenses and is used to trace and locate a subject where extradition may be sought (e.g., unidentified offenders, witnesses).
Green	Provides information on career criminals who have committed, or are likely to commit, offenses in several countries (e.g., habitual offenders, child molesters, pornographers).
Yellow	Seeks missing or lost persons (includes missing and abducted children).
Black	Provides details of unidentified dead bodies or deceased people who may have used false identities.
White	Circulates details and descriptions of all types of stolen or seized property, including art and cultural objects.
Purple	Provides details of unusual modus operandi, including new methods of concealment.
Gray	Provides information on various organized crime groups and their activities.
Orange	Provides information on criminal activity with international ramifications but not involving a specific person or group.
FOPAC	Provides money laundering information for use in countering international money laundering.

international crime. Several sections within INTERPOL's headquarters maintain databases containing records of the names and aliases of people linked to international crime, as well as records of counterfeit currency seizures, theft of works of art, 10-print fingerprints (versus single-print fingerprints), and photos of individuals implicated in international crimes. These databases give a police officer access to an extensive array of information.

The representatives from the NCB in each member country carry out virtually all investigative

assistance for local law enforcement. They collect and disseminate documents and intelligence (e.g., current criminal trends) bearing on international police cooperation and ensures that requests for assistance from both domestic and international agencies are met. The NCBs communicate directly with one another and also keeps INTERPOL headquarters advised of ongoing probes.

INTERPOL's U.S. Role

Located in Washington, DC, the USNCB houses individuals detailed from all of the major federal

criminal investigative agencies, as well as numerous other professional personnel. Working under the authority of the U.S. Department of Justice and in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Treasury, the USNCB divides its workforce into several operational sections to effectively address law enforcement needs.

The Alien/Fugitive Division assists officers in locating fugitives who allegedly have fled the United States or may have entered the United States to avoid arrest in another country. This division also investigates immigration violations,

missing persons, and passport fraud and successfully resolved the case involving the drug dealer immigrant introduced at the beginning of this article. This USNCB group maintains close coordination with the Department of Justice to meet extradition treaty requirements and oversees INTERPOL's red notice program.

Agents and analysts assigned to the Criminal Investigative Division investigate a wide array of offenses. These include organized crime, kidnapping, terrorism, out-law motorcycle gang activity, child abduction, art theft, and violent crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery.

Agents from this division successfully resolved the dilemma faced by the officers in the second introductory scenario by contacting authorities in Europe and proving that the rock band did not tour the cities claimed during the period stated by the defendant. They also assisted in locating the child cited in the third example. The successful resolution of this case highlights the close working relationship the Criminal Division enjoys with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, an international information clearinghouse. This division also has provided invaluable assistance in recovering stolen art and cultural treasures and returning those works to their proper owners.

The agents and analysts who staff the Financial Fraud Division focus on money laundering, currency and bank card counterfeiting, financial instrument smuggling, computer crimes, child

pornography, and a variety of related fraudulent activity. Finally, working with analysts at INTERPOL headquarters, USNCB personnel track new trends in drug trafficking and money laundering.

INTERPOL does not replace the liaison officers of any U.S. agency serving abroad. Those representatives remain a logical first choice for conducting overseas investigations for such agencies. Nonetheless, where applicable, the INTERPOL USNCB works cooperatively with those agencies. Primarily, this work will occur in one of two areas.

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***To protect
against
disruption or
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INTERPOL
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First, INTERPOL's worldwide broadcast communication capabilities are unique. When used effectively, the system serves much like the U.S. National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS), only worldwide. It provides the most expeditious means of broadcasting law enforcement messages around the world. The agency sending the message can include U.S. agency liaison officers on these broadcast messages

as warranted. The notice program provides an example of how the system is used most frequently.

Second, although the liaison officers have the world thoroughly covered with their territorial assignments, travel budgets and logistics still make some remote countries difficult to service. In these instances, the INTERPOL USNCB may provide an alternative means of setting out investigative requests. INTERPOL must closely coordinate this usage with interested agencies to avoid duplicate efforts.

Investigative Limits

Given the diverse array of government structures within the organization, INTERPOL must strive to avoid having its criminal investigative capabilities distorted for other purposes. To this end, INTERPOL will not intervene in activities of a political, military, religious, or racial character. Nonetheless, INTERPOL does conduct investigations of terrorist attacks and distinguishes them from military or political crimes. INTERPOL does not consider terrorist offenses political or military when committed outside a “conflict area” (i.e., a demilitarized zone) or when the victims have no connection with the aims or objectives pursued by the offenders. Thus, INTERPOL may, under most circumstances, assist in investigations of crimes commonly labeled as terrorist events.

In order for INTERPOL to assist in investigations, the originating agency must include a statement of the matter under investigation with every query, assuring the receiving country the legitimacy of

INTERPOL State Bureau Offices and Telephone Numbers

Montgomery, AL	334-260-1170	West Trenton, NJ	609-882-2000, Ext. 2638
Anchorage, AK	907-265-9583	Albuquerque, NM	505-841-8053
Phoenix, AZ	602-223-2158	Albany, NY	518-485-1518
Little Rock, AR	501-618-8373	New York, NY	212-374-5030
Sacramento, CA	916-227-4186	Raleigh, NC	800-334-3000
Denver, CO	303-239-4310	Bismarck, ND	701-221-5500
Meriden, CT	203-238-6561	London, OH	800-282-3784, Ext. 223
Dover, DE	302-739-5998	Oklahoma City, OK	405-848-6724
Tallahassee, FL	850-488-0586	Salem, OR	503-378-3720
Decatur, GA	404-244-2554	Harrisburg, PA	717-705-2344
Honolulu, HI	808-586-1249	N. Scituate, RI	401-444-1006
Meridian, ID	208-884-7124	Columbia, SC	803-896-7008
Springfield, IL	217-782-8760	Pierre, SD	605-773-3331
Indianapolis, IN	317-232-7796	Nashville, TN	615-741-0430
Des Moines, IA	515-242-6124	Austin, TX	512-424-2200
Topeka, KS	913-296-8261	Murray, UT	801-284-6200
Frankfort, KY	502-227-8708	Waterbury, VT	802-244-8781
Baton Rouge, LA	504-925-6213	Richmond, VA	804-323-2493
Augusta, ME	207-624-8787	Olympia, WA	360-753-3277
Columbia, MD	410-290-0780	South Charleston, WV	304-558-3324
Framingham, MA	508-820-2129	Madison, WI	608-266-1671
Lansing, MI	517-336-6637	Cheyenne, WY	307-777-6615
St. Paul, MN	612-642-0610	Washington, DC	202-724-1426
Jackson, MS	601-987-1592	Pago Pago,	684-633-2827
Jefferson City, MO	573-751-3452	American Samoa	
Helena, MT	406-444-3874	San Juan, Puerto Rico	787-729-2048
Lincoln, NE	402-479-4957	St. Croix, U.S. Virgin	809-778-6601
Carson City, NV	702-687-3346	Islands	
Concord, NH	603-271-2663		

Law enforcement agencies requiring assistance from INTERPOL should contact the liaison office in their state. Additional information is also available through the USNCB at 202-616-9000; fax, 202-616-8400; NLETS, DCINTER00; or on the Internet at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usncb/>.

the inquiry and the right to challenge. Generally, an offense must be a violation of law in all countries requesting investigations.

Contact Guidelines

How can police agencies in the United States extend their reach around the world? As a first step,

the USNCB suggests that agencies review outstanding warrants and other cases for those whose subjects may have some international connection. This may be by birth, past travel history, known associations, or even simple possession of a passport. A recent review of the National Crime Information Center

records indicated more than 400,000 active wanted person records; however, fewer than 600 international fugitive wanted notices have been issued by the United States. This comparison indicates that law enforcement agencies may not be using INTERPOL's red notices to their fullest potential.

Each of the 50 states—along with Puerto Rico, Washington, DC, New York City, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa—has a designated state liaison office through which state and local officers may connect to NCBs around the world. Thus, when a state or local agency believes that INTERPOL may be useful in an investigation, it should contact the state liaison office to forward information to the USNCB. Agencies can accomplish this by fax, telephone, mail, or by using NLETS. Requests for assistance should incorporate all available details, including a thorough description of suspects, set out in clear, concise language, as well as a statement of the nature of the request to be made of the overseas NCB. Federal agencies should follow their own policies and guidelines for contacting INTERPOL. Although agencies incur no direct cost for INTERPOL services, they must bear the cost of extradition-related expenses, such as transportation of the fugitive back to the United States to face charges.

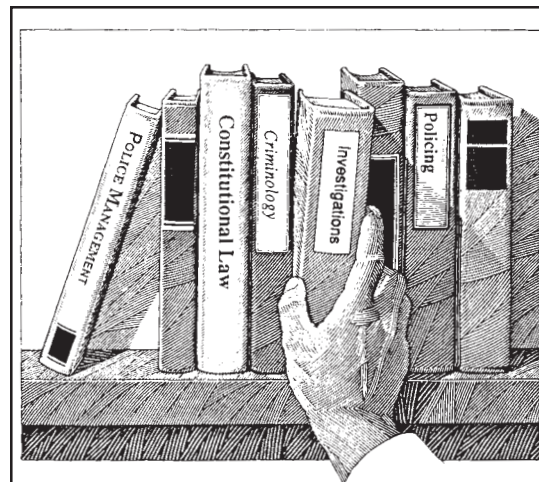
Conclusion

International impediments to commerce relax with each passing month. The North American Free Trade Act, the European Union, and the Internet are bringing incredible changes and breaking through restraints on the transit of cargo, people, and information. Movement of people and goods from continent to continent that before took weeks, if not months, now can be conducted within hours. Data moves around the globe in seconds.

Unfortunately, as advantageous as this may sound for businesses, criminals also can benefit from the ease of transport. The speed at which these transactions occur often allows criminals to elude investigators before they can obtain arrest warrants. Illegal activity also may take place on a scale beyond the ability of a single agency to appropriately respond.

In this age of computer-driven crimes and jet travel allowing the crossing of international borders with ease, police officers must use all available tools to maintain a level playing field with criminals. Knowledge of these tools remains an important step, but actually using the tools empowers an agency to fulfill its mission of protecting its citizens.

Since early this century, INTERPOL has been a tremendous resource to law enforcement. It provides police officers the ability to reach out to every continent to find fugitives, obtain information needed for prosecution or investigation, and return stolen art and other valuable property to the rightful owner. Whether the person needing assistance is a police chief in a small town, a county sheriff, or an agent from a federal law enforcement agency, INTERPOL remains an invaluable tool investigators across the globe can use to coordinate a myriad of information to assist them with international investigations. ♦



Ticking Bombs: Defusing Violence in the Workplace, by Michael Mantell, Ph.D., with Steve Albrecht, Irwin Publishing, New York, New York, 1994.

When it comes to crime and violence, police officials take a certain amount of comfort in knowing that the private sector looks to them for research, management, and training. But when it comes to workplace violence, particularly by nonstrangers, law enforcement lags far behind the private sector in recognition, prevention, and management. *Ticking Bombs: Defusing Workplace Violence* provides an excellent overview of the subject.

The book thoroughly examines the problem and provides practical steps that law enforcement and private sector managers can use to prevent in-house violence and manage people and situations that are potentially violent. The author spent 10 years as the chief psychologist for the San